

Matwatch '93

Steve
Beverly

Through the years, I have viewed some rather unconventional sequences in pro wrestling.

In 1966, I watched Mario Galento run the Medics out of the Channel 11 studio in Atlanta with a double-barrel shotgun. In 1987, I viewed Ric Flair evolve into a sex pervert in a tasteless Dusty Rhodes-created angle involving Flair's lust for "Precious" Garvin.

In the fall of '89, I saw Terry Funk attempt to "smother" Flair with a plastic bag, which Terry quickly admitted was not his idea and apologized for the next week. The next summer, Eddie Gilbert ran down Jerry Lawler with a car in the parking lot of WMC-TV on its live wrestling show, an angle I advised Eddie was way over the line of responsibility.

But after the June 19 episodes of *WCW Saturday Night* and *WCW Worldwide*, I think I've nearly reached the point it's time to turn off the set.

By now, I do not have to depict for you the storyline of part two of WCW's "mini-movie" to build its Sting/Davey Boy Smith vs. Big Van Vader/Sid Vicious main event for *Beach Blast*. In short, Vader and Vicious appear to hire a midget to plant a live bomb inside Sting's and Smith's boat. Sting climbs aboard and thanks to a tip from a child who saw the midget, Smith makes a miraculous rescue of Sting before the bomb explodes.

If you want to examine this from the standpoint of sheer production values, WCW reportedly spent \$80,000 to film these vignettes in the Tampa Bay area. The company has had some success in the past with the mini-movie concept, particularly in the "Spin the Wheel, Make the Deal" episode for Sting vs. Jake Roberts.

But never mind that the acting was right out of a rerun of *Lost in Space* and

(Continued on Page 2)

Let WCW Rest in Peace

Ted: It's Time To Surrender

By STEVE BEVERLY
Matwatch '93 Publisher

T

his may be the most agonizing commentary I have yet written on pro wrestling and television. Since becoming hooked on the mat when *Big Time Wrestling* blasted into my den in 1965 from Atlanta, I have watched my favorite childhood promotion evolve into a pea-sized portion of the Ted Turner conglomerate.

Five years ago, when Turner Broadcasting bought out Jim Crockett Promotions and the U.S. flagship of the National Wrestling Alliance, it was my fervent hope this company could become the frontline challenger to the World Wrestling Federation and at least make national, top-level wrestling competitive for viewers, ticketbuyers and creativity. That should only have made this industry better.

In the early going, WCW executives genuinely tried. Struggling with a corporation

full of divisions with employees embarrassed at the mere idea of TBS owning a wrestling company and with a disastrous merchandising deal struck by Jim Crockett, WCW produced the most lavish and critically-acclaimed pay-per-view shows, moved out of the dungeon of the small TBS studio for its weekly shows and offered the most-watched and most-anticipated specials, *Clash of the Champions*, on basic cable television.

Viewing records for cable were established with the Ric Flair-Lex Luger, Sting-Black Scorpion (both Sept. 1990 *Clash* toppers) and Flair-Terry Funk ("I Quit," Nov. 1989) matches. A February 1990 edition of *WCW Main Event* would set an all-time viewer high for a weekly wrestling series.

Arena attendance, which never eclipsed the sellout and \$200,000-plus house in Baltimore at the 1989 *Great American Bash: Glory Days*, was a perpetual problem and with the exception of a scattered few cities, never loudly rang the cash register. An inconsistent lineup of syndicated television was largely to blame, both in time periods and affiliate stations, as well as a slowly declining curve of national wrestling interest.

For every lemon of a talent introduction, such as 1989's *The Dingdongs*, WCW would develop *The Skyscrapers*—including the charismatic Sid Vicious (Sid Eudy), *The Great Muta* (Keiji Mutoh) and Scott Steiner (as part of wrestling's most popular brother tag team). Further, Jim Ross would flourish as the broadcaster of record for the late '80s and early '90s.

However, the inner workings of WCW were shuttling as fast as vans and trucks in and out of a high school car wash. Creative direction and supervisors would last as long as a pizza in Roseanne Arnold's house. Announcer lineups would alternate as quickly as movements on a Chinese checkers board. Wrestler defections increased. Television focus would be as consistent as a three-ring circus.

(Continued on Page 2)

COMMENTARY

Steve Beverly
(Continued from Page 1)

the script and direction were like a bad episode of *Baywatch*. The June 19 segment, reportedly a collaboration of WCW vice presidents Sharon Sidello and Al (Ole Anderson) Rogowski, not only crossed the line of taste and responsibility, but of morality and reality, as well.

When wrestling has enjoyed success in the past, it has been as a result of its creativity and conflict reflecting at least an edge of reality.

Let me confront you people with this: are we now to believe Leon White and Sid Eudy have become so evil and demented they are now accomplices to attempted murder? Reality suggests if so, those two would be in jail today, regardless of any wrestler saying, "Don't lock him up---I want to get him in the ring!"

Take it a step further: there were children looking on as the incident evolved. *Jurassic Park* may be scaring the tar out of movie audiences but you pay your money and can get enough reviews to know what you're getting. One does not have that luxury on television.

Some colleagues say they aren't worried so much about kids seeing it. I am. Why? Because of the lack of responsibility here. I've tried to tell you for five years it is more than an issue of turning off the set or switching channels. How many children do you know watch TV unsupervised? Where is the standards and practices department of TBS in all of this? If a few more voices don't begin to hold broadcasters to the fire on behalf of children, stay tuned. The envelope will be pushed eventually beyond the point of sanity. (*In all fairness, TBS banned the segment from the Superstation after its original airing.*)

In the June 21 issue of *Broadcasting and Cable*, Ted Turner endorses tougher anti-violence broadcast guidelines, as proposed by a Capitol Hill committee chaired by Sen. Paul Simon (D-ILL.). "We will adhere to stricter standards than those employed by the broadcast networks," said Turner. He also said TBS is prepared to institute a rating system for its programming, similar to that of the Motion Picture Association of America. Turner obviously had not seen the June 19 WCW Saturday Night.

If Turner is sincere about his views, I applaud him. And if he is to back them up with action, the heads of the creative minds who developed the attempted murder sequence should roll as a show of faith to the public.

This is clearly a matter of broadcast responsibility, of which precious little has been exercised by broadcasters and cablecasters alike in the last ten years. Ted Turner is both. His motto has always been, "Lead, follow, or get out of the way." Mr. Turner, I suggest it's time you personally do the leading with WCW.

Steve Beverly

Time to Surrender

(Continued from Page 1)

Still, until the early part of 1992, with a few short-term slumps, ratings held at least at respectable levels. As late as November 1991, *Clash of the Champions* registered a 4.3.

The cracks began to widen when Turner attorney Kip Frey was placed in charge and embarked on both a deficit spending spree as free-wheeling as Congress and a disastrous attempt to "reinvent the wheel" of WCW's perennial flagship Saturday night show. As for the latter, viewers tuned out in droves (dropping from a 2.8 to a 2.2 average in nine weeks), telling TBS they were not interested in a two-hour talk show.

The importing of the man thousands of hardcores once believed would be the savior of WCW (including the *Matwatch '93* editor) was nothing short of a disaster. While TBS weekly ratings stabilized and increased slightly under the Bill Watts regime, Watts simply had a talent for making too many people too angry too fast. *Clash* ratings plummeted. Political infighting resembled war-torn Bosnia.

So what is WCW left with for an executive staff today? A president whose experience is in overseeing human resources for TBS. A senior vice president who presided over the departure of the Atlanta Flames hockey team 15 years ago. A woman allegedly responsible for the dramatic depiction of attempted murder on WCW's top cable and syndicated shows. Two tired, worn, passe creative leaders named Anderson and Rhodes whose best days were a decade or more ago and who have been recycled more than bad baseball managers. And a 30-year-old who wants to take WCW as far Hollywood as Bill and Hillary Clinton are taking America to the left.

Cable ratings? The Saturday evening show is almost locked at a 2 rating and just finished its worst rating sweep period in history. The Sunday edition struggles to even reach a 2. Saturday morning has become a mere throwaway.

Syndication? Think shifting to Disney-MGM Studios for taping will wow station managers? WCW's two primary syndicated series boast a horrible lineup of stations and time periods, despite the best efforts of one of the few quality executives in the company, syndie chief Rob Garner.

Pay-per-view? For more than a year, this company has failed to draw 1 per cent of the available pay-addressable homes for its spectaculars. While the shows are still profitable, they are marginally so for this company's overhead and splits with Turner Home Entertainment.

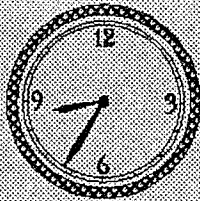
Clash of the Champions? In less than three years, the once-anticipated specials have declined 48 per cent in ratings. The June "return of Ric Flair" to the ring, regarded by many hardcores as the last possible salvation for WCW, attracted 16 per cent fewer viewers than The 1-2-3 Kid did four days later on *Monday Night Raw*.

On top of this, World Championship Wrestling has been engaged in the past three months in envelope-pushing content, which smacks of desperation and virtually never works in reviving television ratings and ticket sales:

***Outright mockery of the mentally ill and the homeless in a *Search for Cactus Jack* series of vignettes.

***Overt sexual situations in the first five weeks of *A Flair for the Gold*, centered

(Continued on Page 6)



As Time Goes By

Expect the WWF to explore syndication of a national radio show independent of WSB-AM in Atlanta. Jim Ross would host. Joe Pedicino could assume the WSB show if the WWF effort launches....TBS won't resume Center Stage tapings until Aug. 2. That means a quick build for *Clash of the Champions*, which has been moved up to Aug. 18. WCW is adding a September pay-per-view, plus TBS cannot afford to risk the ratings-diminishing *Clash* against fall network premieres in September.

Jim Cornette's comments on radio and The Real Wrestling Hotline about the WCW mini-movie murder mess were both gutsy and appropo....Some nights, Michael Kinsley on CNN's *Crossfire* reminds me of Cornette.... Isn't it ironic that much of the screaming at WCW in recent weeks is similar to the kind we once did at the WWF for its past sleaze?

This is hardly original: but considering the state of ratings, companies and viewers would be best served for the WWF and WCW to cut back to one cable show a week (WWF on Mondays, WCW Saturdays). But don't expect it unless TBS clips WCW's wings....*Ad Week* reports USA Cable may take a long look at ratings for *WWF Mania*.

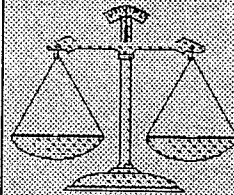
All-American Wrestling pre-empted July 4 for USA's day-long moviefest....Speaking of that September pay show, at a time when this industry is repeatedly shooting blanks, a sixth WCW pay-per-view is the last thing viewers need or want.

In a rare indie shot, Jim Crockett did a half-hour of Ric Carter's Las Vegas radio talkfest June 29. Gordon Solie was scheduled July 6....Tom Snyder related another story about his *Live Atlanta Wrestling* days with Ed Capral on his CNBC talker....One more time: discount ANY and ALL rumors about Time-Warner or HBO buying WCW. Use common sense, folks: why would these companies want to take on a proven money-loser?

*** COMING SOON ***

JIM'S BAKE SALE

A Joint Venture of Wrestling
Fans and Former Employees
To Bail Out WCW's Financial
Deficit



MATWATCH '93

EDITORIAL

In our previous issue, *Matwatch '93* was highly critical of World Championship Wrestling executive producer Eric Bischoff and questioned the leadership of WCW president Bill Shaw. At this writing, the jury remains out on both in their quest to reinvent WCW. However, *Matwatch '93* applauds both men for recent internal actions.

According to insider reports, Shaw acted decisively and forcefully June 24 to order an end to the universally-panned mini-movie in which Sid Vicious and Big Van Vader were portrayed as accomplices to an attempted murder of Sting and Davey Boy Smith. TBS had earlier in the week banned future showings of the mini-movie on the superstation.

Further, Shaw reportedly called for no future vignettes similar to the tasteless "Search for Cactus Jack" series which resulted in a mockery of the mentally ill, homeless and handicapped, not to mention journalism.

In addition, Bischoff stepped in at a June 22 Center Stage taping and refused to allow The Posse, a new black tag team, to be led to the ring in shackles and chains by Robert Fuller as Col. Rob Parker. One does not have to draw a picture to specify the image this would have sent to viewers.

Whereas these are only small steps in cleaning up the WCW cesspool, both Shaw and Bischoff are to be commended for doing not only what is right but the only alternatives.

On the other hand, *Matwatch '93* finds disturbing a recent development on the WCW Hotline.

WCW operations chief Ole Anderson now hosts the Saturday segment, "Inside the Four Horsemen." His June 14 program was an abomination which turned the hotline into the WCW Sexline. Anderson tried contacting Ric Flair at a bordello, where Ole learned several attendees had "enjoyed Space Mountain" during the evening. Later, Anderson was told Flair was at a hospital. "Ric picked up six nurses last night but only two of them could report for work," a voice told Ole. "The doctors have promised not to press any charges."

In a telephone search for Arn Anderson, Ole was told Arn was judging the 1993 Miss Nude World Pageant. "I judged that a couple of years ago," said Ole. "It's a three-day event. You try to stretch it another couple of days. You have to get real close up to do the judging."

A few twisted minds may be entertained by this sleaze. However, in one six-minute segment, Anderson exhibited an age-old demeaning of women. The 976-brand blue material is hardly fare for children calling the WCW hotline with no warning of content. In an era of AIDS and intense battles nationwide with youth promiscuity, this is anything but the kind of image TBS and WCW should be promoting with Anderson or Flair. Flair, himself, ought to be distancing himself from that image in his current fan favorite role.

Matwatch '93 calls on Shaw to act swiftly to eliminate this kind of content from his telephone programming. One recommend step: get rid of Anderson, whose career has been based on race-baiting and sleazebucket content. As a WCW executive, he should know better but obviously does not. Shaw must act decisively as a matter of responsibility.

MATWATCH '93

PAGE 4 VOL. 1, NO. 2 JULY 1993

THE RATINGS PAGE

CABLE WRESTLING RATINGS

Averages for June	Rating/Share	Total Homes	May Avg.
Monday Night Raw	2.8/4.5	1,708 million	2.7/4.0
WWF All-American	2.4/7.4	1,436 million	2.1/6.9
WCW Main Event	2.0/4.9	1,219 million	1.9/4.3
WCW Saturday Night	2.0/5.2	1,211 million	2.0/4.9
WCW Power Hour	1.1/4.8	660,200	1.3/5.3
WWF Mania	1.0/3.5	587,300	1.1/3.8

Week Ending June 7	Rating/Share	Total Homes	Nat. Rank
Monday Night Raw (6/7)	2.5/3.8	1,507 million	18
WWF All-American (6/6)	2.4/7.3	1,446 million	24
WCW Saturday Night (6/5)	2.0/4.5	1,206 million	50
WCW Power Hour (6/5)	1.3/5.1	780,400	
WWF Mania (6/5)	0.8/2.6	482,100	

Week Ending June 14

Monday Night Raw (6/14)	2.8/4.6	1,709 million	7
WWF All-American (6/13)	2.2/7.1	1,324 million	29
WCW Saturday Night (6/12)	2.0/5.5	1,206 million	40
WCW Main Event (6/13)	1.7/4.3	1,021 million	57
WWF Mania (6/12)	1.1/4.1	662,200	
WCW Power Hour (6/12)	1.0/4.6	600,000	

Week Ending June 21

Monday Night Raw (6/21)	3.1/5.0	1,864 million	T4
Clash/Champions (6/24)	2.6/4.7	1,549 million	12
WWF All-American (6/20)	2.5/7.4	1,487 million	T17
WCW Saturday Night (6/19)	2.0/5.5	1,229 million	33
WCW Main Event (6/20)	2.0/4.9	1,186 million	38
WCW Power Hour (6/19)	1.0/4.5	600,000	
WWF Mania (6/19)	0.9/3.3	542,000	

Week Ending June 28

Monday Night Raw (6/28)	2.8/4.5	1,708 million	N/A
WWF All-American (6/27)	2.5/7.7	1,516 million	N/A
WCW Main Event (6/27)	2.4/5.5	1,452 million	N/A
WCW Saturday Night (6/26)	2.0/5.6	1,214 million	N/A
WCW Power Hour (6/26)	1.1/4.9	664,000	N/A
WWF Mania (6/26)	1.1/4.0	662,000	N/A

THE REAL WRESTLING HOTLINE

Dave Meltzer (Mon-Wed-Fri)
Steve Beverly (Tu-Sat)
Jim Cornette (Thu)
John Arezzi (Sun)

and

TERRY FUNK
PAUL E. DANGEROUSLY
1-900-903-9030

WHAT THEY MEAN

While we're not willing to concede a trend, other than the success of *Monday Night Raw*, we did see slight upward movement in ratings for three shows in June. *Raw* was up 4% from May, headed by the 3.1 for the 1-2-3 Kid win over Razor Ramon. *All-American's* 2.4 was its top monthly average of the year, up 14 per cent over May. While only seen three times, *WCW Main Event* gained with each week of June and showed a one-tenth point increase over May.

WCW Saturday Night, once the flagship mat show for cable TV, appears hopelessly locked at a 2.0, its figure for seven consecutive weeks, as of the end of June. Many weeks, *Saturday Night* is beaten soundly by, among other items, *Clarissa Explains It All*, *Rugrats*, *Ren and Stimpy* and The Nashville Network's *Statler Brothers Show*. The Eric Bischoff return as host of *Power Hour* after ceding only two weeks to Gordon Solie hasn't helped one iota.

AFTER THE CLASH

Last month's *Clash of the Champions* proved how much smaller the core audience is for WCW in 1993. In its heyday, *Clash* specials opened in upper 2 ranges. But the Simmons-Slater opener only scored a 1.7/3.6. With the exception of one quarter-hour, the audiences did grow as the night progressed but the entire first hour only averaged a 1.9. The Windham-Scorpio NWA title match jumped to a 2.7/4.5.

The six-man tag bout jumped to a 3.3/5.4. Ironically, the audience went down for the first fall of Ric Flair/Arn Anderson vs. the Hollywood Blonds (3.2/5.2). The entire finale and post-match brawl averaged a 3.4/5.6 in 2,035 million homes, the least-watched main event in *Clash* history. If this group can't rebound Aug. 18, it has no excuse. Another poor showing will almost surely doom *Clash* renewals for '94.

FINAL NOTES

Monday Night Raw's winning streak now up to 18 weeksCould you have ever pictured the 1-2-3 Kid outpointing Ric Flair in the ratings?....For Bischoff's 18 weeks as WCW executive producer, he is averaging a 2.09 for *Saturday Night* but expect WCW chief Bill Shaw to stick with him.... For the record, USA clobbered *Clash of the Champions* with Jesse Ventura's pal. *Rambo III* scored a 3.8 rating opposite *Clash*. Expect another action movie against it in August.

MATWATCH '93 SUBSCRIPTIONS

A three-month subscription to *Matwatch '93* is \$5.00 for three issues. Single copies are \$1.75. Check, cash or money order to: STEVE BEVERLY, 16 ROBIN HOOD LANE, JACKSON TN 38305. International rate: \$9.00 for three issues.

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Commentator

Corner

Tony Schiavone

Let us state clearly: we do not dislike Tony Schiavone personally. We've only met him a couple of times. He is a family man. He can claim a decade of steady employment as a wrestling commentator.

In many venues, Schiavone is regarded among the top three contemporaries in his field. His reappointment as host of WCW *Saturday Night* suggests WCW has more faith in him to carry its flagship mat show than the departed Jim Ross.

On the plus side, Schiavone now has ten years of growth he didn't have when he was thrown into the TBS breach in 1985. He has been affiliated with enough talent on the path between the WWF and WCW that his industry knowledge is superior to the days when he could not identify a DDT.

Further, Schiavone's personality is neutral enough that he is not offensive. Ironically, that may key his weakness.

The ex-baseball announcer has lacked the spark and dynamism he displayed in 1988 when Ross backed him on TBS as an analyst and in 1989-90, when he was given a shot at two WWF pay-per-views with Jesse Ventura.

Consider:

***Schiavone perennially fails to aggressively challenge heels on illegal behavior, a necessity of any quality lead commentator. Take the win of Brian Pillman and Steve Austin to win the WCW/NWA tag titles. Clearly, Austin clobbered Steamboat with a title belt to gain the win. Afterward, instead of reinforcing and disputing the action, Schiavone merely proclaimed, "Congratulations to the Hollywood Blonds---new WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS!" Never once did he challenge them. Could you see Ross, Vince McMahon, Gordon Solie or Lance Russell letting Pillman and Austin off that easy?

***After the first TBS Big Van Vader-Cactus Jack bout, Vader was going berserk and bopped Tony in the neck twice. Had it been Solie, Ross or McMahon, they would have instinctively ordered Harley Race to get Vader under control. Instead, Schiavone just handed over the mike. At the end, instead of

(Continued on Page 6)



KING-OF-THE-RING

At first glance, the idea of another tournament was enough to bring on a yawn from even the most ardent TV mat viewer, a category shrinking with every passing month.

Yet, the WWF's *King-of-the-Ring* was an entertaining show, primarily because of its laser-like focus on a key element: storyline. Unlike its past *Wrestlemania IV* and WCW's dreadful 1992 effort with the televised NWA/WCW unified tag elimination, Titan accomplished a solid effort with two significant changes.

One, keeping the tournament participants to seven kept the show from dragging and made the eliminations easier to follow. Two, non-tourney bouts were not scheduled as throwaways and did not intrude on the tournament itself.

But the focus was clearly on Bret Hart, first as an underdog; second, having to wrestle three matches to win---including overcoming a false referee decision; third, by not moaning over or referring to Hulk Hogan's title loss during Hart's finale win over Bam Bam Bigelow. The tourney was the billionth variation on the classic "never say die" theme but Hart's intensity made it work.

Jim Ross did a credible job to interject historical data on the competitors, a no-no on past WWF paycasts. However, Titan should contemplate reverting to two men in the booth or alternating Bobby Heenan and Randy Savage with Ross (a la Jim Cornette and Terry Funk at *Starrcade '89*). In the latter matches, the competition and volume between Heenan and Savage for the mike intruded on portions of Ross's calls.

Titan cannot avoid dead giveaways when its WWF heavyweight title is defended at mid-show. A Hulk Hogan victory and post-match celebration would have diluted the impact of the tourney. But the end-of-show attack on King Hart by Jerry Lawler went against the grain of the WWF's usual philosophy of "send 'em home happy." So, the element of surprise was evident.

The key again was storyline and the elements made for a smooth evening. *Grade: 93.*

CLASH OF THE CHAMPIONS

One wag was not far off the mark by suggesting the Norfolk *Clash* was what a good Saturday night WCW show should look like. On the plus side, TBS managed to draw a more enthusiastic crowd than in any *Clash* since the November 1991 show in Savannah.

Further, the Barry Windham-Too Cold Scorpio bout showcased the killer heel Windham has become so talented in portraying and allowed Scorpio to grow as a mat performer.

However, the first hour of this *Clash* was indicative of poor program structure. The segments were so abrupt and staccato and so many commercial breaks were slotted so quickly, viewer concentration had to be disrupted. Plus, after seeing Ron Simmons vs. Dick Slater open the show, maybe these people can now understand why a Road Warriors or Midnight Express used to kick off these specials to build early viewer enthusiasm.

Producer Virgil Runnels could not resist the time-worn steel case-bashing finish in the six-man tag feature. Plus, the Ric Flair return storyline was hardly developed all evening with no retrospective tapes to build the finale. Runnels' insistence on a DQ finish adds cliché upon cliché and failure to allow the young Hollywood Blonds one fall to build suspense was inexcusable.

Tony Schiavone and Jesse Ventura were good, not great, at the mike, though Schiavone actually challenged a pro-heel assertion of Ventura's. Eric Bischoff was too hyper and Michael Buffer appeared to be disinterested in the entire affair. TBS was smart to limit this one to two hours. WCW needs to return to its *Clash* roots: only four or five bouts with each one a literal clash of champions. *Grade: 84.*

Commentator Corner

(Continued from Page 5)

a major buildup for the next week, Tony says sheepishly: "I guess...uh...we're going to have....uh....a rematch next week.....and, frankly....I don't think I want to be here." That's a dynamic way to engender enthusiasm. Any wonder the rematch only scored a 2.1 rating?

***The Schiavone-Ventura chemistry is overrated. It is hardly a threat to Summerall-Madden. Some weeks, Ventura literally walks all over Tony. If Ventura exhorts the virtues of the heel tactics, Schiavone rarely argues. It's as if he's in awe of being at the table with Jesse. Remember the strength of the McMahon-Ventura team? It came from Vince's aggressiveness in taking an opposing view when Jesse was a hardcore villain defender.

***Schiavone cannot be faulted for two difficulties only a producer can correct. A March-April series of ringside interviews designed in part, I'm told, to deflect criticism from me on the WCW Hotline, did the opposite. When a parade of wrestlers walked away from Schiavone questions, the end result made Tony look weak. A strong producer could have given Schiavone a stronger persona.

Additionally, the June 26 edition of *WCW Worldwide* made Schiavone look passive. Stationed outside Ric Flair's dressing room door to begin the show, Schiavone details an apparent fight between Flair and Barry Windham. Ventura screams, "Go on, Schiavone! Do your job! Be a man! Get in there and find out what's happening!" Tony doesn't move. Again, a producer should recognize two things: the show host should not double as an arena "reporter;" further, if he does, he has to appear in charge.

At best, Schiavone has been an adequate lead commentator. But nowhere near the personality who adds a couple of tenths of a rating point merely for his match calls.

Tony sorely needs more enthusiasm in his on-camera facial expression, an occasional smile and some appropriate indignance. This is where veteran hands Russell or Solie could be invaluable as a coach.

Time to Surrender

(Continued from Page 2)

around the libido of Flair and Arn Anderson until settling into a pattern of spotlighting other wrestlers and storylines.

***The now-infamous attempted murder sequence in the *Beach Blast* mini-movie, which went against the grain of every tenet of anti-violence programming Ted Turner proclaimed in a June 25 address to Congress. Turner said Congress "should take anti-violence guidelines and ram them down the throat of broadcasters."

***A Saturday hotline segment (see *Matwatch '93 Editorial*, page 3) which extols the virtues of brothels, celebrates promiscuity and hails exploitation of female nudity. The segment was hosted by WCW's vice president of wrestling operations.

Add to that, a pathetic attempt to rekindle a 13-year-old feud between two over-the-hill warhorses that was seen by a far smaller superstition audience in its early days of national exposure.

Further, the current philosophy of taping months of syndicated output in Florida at a time appears to reduce this company to the closing year of the AWA. Plus, the recent charade at a late June series of arena shows of telling fans the injured and absent Vader, Barry Windham and Paul Orndorff were in the midst of "contract disputes" was reprehensible.

The WCW of 1993 appears to be out of ideas, out of touch and out of control. The view from here is that not even massive personnel changes, which are highly in order---if for no other reason than the sake of respect and taste, and refocusing of content can save this once-promising mat entity.

At the very best, yet another administration could borrow an idea original WCW senior v.p. Jim Herd espoused when he took over the company in 1989. "If we were a department store," Herd said, "we would put up a sign and say closed for remodeling---will reopen in eight to ten weeks." The very last-ditch effort might accomplish that, going into reruns for two to three months and returning with a fresh name, image and philosophy.

However, the consensus of too many learned insiders is that it is strictly too late, even with the best untapped creative mind. To continue what has become, at best, an enterprise television viewers and ticketbuyers increasingly eschew is a drain on finances, emotions and---with a few more escapades like dramatized murder attempts---Turner Broadcasting reputation.

The time has come to admit this has been a valiant five-year effort, but simply not a successful one. To prolong it would be like watching a small animal caught in a steel leg trap. As in the title of a 1960s Jimmy Webb song, "It's Over."

MATWATCH '93
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